

Appendix 2: Guide to Bible Study
from *Teaching Biblical Faith: Leading Small Group Bible Studies, Leader's Guide*

1. Read the text carefully.
2. Turn to a study Bible or biblical dictionary.
3. Ask what kind of writing the text represents.
4. Ask what is known about authorship and context.
5. Ask what we know about theological perspective and concern of the author.
6. Now having insights on literary, historical, and theological commitments, reread the text. Note what it may have meant to those reading it in its own time.
7. Finally, ask what the text may be saying to your contemporary community.

Appendix 3: Notes on a Historical Study of Luke 4:14-30¹

These initial notes outlining a historical Bible study of Luke 4:14-30 should give you a head start and illustrate how you can use the guide provided to complete a historical study of your own. Feel free to use these notes and add additional information under each question. Also, working through the text, respond to questions six and seven to explain what you think the text meant in its day and what it means for us now. Remember that there will probably be differences of interpretation among people in your group.

1. Read the text carefully.
 - a. Say a prayer asking for God's presence and guidance as you study Luke 4:14-30.
 - b. Begin by reading Luke 4:14-30 twice.
 - c. Look at what story precedes this passage in the Gospel of Luke—Jesus' temptation in the wilderness.
 - d. Look at what story follows this passage—Jesus' teaching in Capernaum where the crowds were amazed by him and how he healed both a man with a demon and Simon's mother-in-law.
 - e. List any questions you have after reading the passage or any insights you have. For example:
 - i. Questions
 1. Why did the synagogue assistant only give Jesus the scroll of Isaiah?
 2. What are the meanings of the stories of the widow in Elijah's time and Naaman the Syrian?
 - ii. Insights
 1. In verse 22, everyone was so impressed with Jesus, but by verse 28, they were angry with him.
2. Turn to a study Bible or biblical dictionary.
 - a. Read the introduction to the Gospel of Luke in a study Bible.
 - b. Note some insights or questions that come to you. For example:

¹ For a full exegesis and interpretation of this text, see ch. 1, "Following Jesus: Naming a Vocation" from *Teaching the Way of Jesus: Educating Christians for Faithful Living* by Jack L. Seymour (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2014).

- i. The writer of Luke is unknown. While traditions from a century later attributed it to Luke, there is no evidence who wrote it. We do know that the writer was well-educated and sought to communicate his message to the early followers of Jesus.
- ii. The writer of Luke also writes Acts of the Apostles. Together the two books tell a full story about Jesus and the impact Jesus had on the birth of the church.
- iii. The author seeks to write an investigated account of Jesus' life that draws on eyewitnesses and other available information. (Luke 1:1-4)
- iv. Luke is a gospel—gospel is a genre of religious literature that tells the good news about how God's activity in the world makes a difference.
- v. One focus of the book is to take the mission of the followers of the Way of Jesus to those outside Israel.
- vi. Luke was written between 70-100 CE—forty to seventy years after Jesus lived.
- vii. The book focuses on the “realm” or “kingdom of God” and calls people to change their lives.

3. Ask what kind of writing the text represents.

- a. Luke is a gospel. As a genre, gospel is different from history or other narratives because it presents an orderly account of events in light of religious commitments. Luke communicates the good news about Jesus that he thinks is important and life-transforming.
 - i. The author believes it is good news both for the Jewish community in which Jesus lived and the wider Gentile community.
 - ii. The introduction begins by telling the reader that the author has investigated the sources (both eyewitnesses and other stories handed down within the community). From what he has learned, Luke then constructs a narrative.
 - iii. He knows others have sought to compile various accounts of these events. He wants his to be one where readers can “have confidence in the soundness of its instruction” (Luke 1:4). It sounds as if he does not think some of the stories circulating are as accurate as his work.
- b. In Luke 4:16-30, the author tells a story about Jesus' reading scripture in his hometown and how the people who live there react to him.
- c. Luke 4:18-19 includes a quotation from Isaiah 61 which Jesus is asked to read in the synagogue. Isaiah's writing is a prophecy highlighting what God expects of God's people.
- d. In verse 22, the crowd is described as being “amazed” at Jesus' “gracious words” but then quickly shifts to anger in verse 28 after Jesus refers to two stories about how the community of Israel is rejected in favor of strangers.
 - i. 1 Kings 17:8-24—a story about how Elijah (the greatest of Hebrew prophets) meets a poor woman outside the community of Israel. There is a conflict in the Israelite community, and God provides for a widow outside the community.
 - ii. 2 Kings 5:1-19—a story about how God's prophet, Elisha, gives a Syrian, a powerful enemy of Israel, God's healing and grace.

4. Ask what is known about authorship and context.

- a. Tradition has passed down that the author was Luke, the physician whom Paul knew, but we really do not know who wrote it. These traditions about authorship arose later.
- b. The book was written many years after Jesus lived, and much had happened in the community—the Jewish-Roman war, the destruction of the Temple, the increase of Roman control, and the spread of the Way of Jesus to many communities from Rome

to north Africa to the Middle East. These events profoundly affected the author's point of view.

- c. The church was being formed, and many of the new leaders were Gentile.
5. Ask what we know about theological perspective and concern of the author.
 - a. By looking at the stories that appear in the other three Gospels, Matthew, Mark, and John, we can see the unique perspectives of each. Scholars are clear that Luke had read Mark. The author draws on and edits some of their stories, while also including some material that is found only in Luke.
 - b. Since the author of Luke also wrote Acts, we have two interrelated stories: one focusing on the life and ministry of Jesus and the other on the expansion of Jesus' message as seen through the founding and growth of the early church. While Luke pays attention to the Jewish context for Jesus' ministry, he focuses more on the expansion of this ministry to Gentiles. In fact, he sees the contemporaries of Jesus rejecting him, and the Gentiles following his path.
 - c. Luke also focuses on the ministry of Jesus to the poor and marginalized. Throughout the Gospel, the rich (who probably aligned themselves with the power of Rome) always miss the message of Jesus and how his ministry extends to the least. For three examples, see Mary's song (see Luke 1:46-55), the fact that "poor" shepherds come to see Jesus after his birth (see Luke 2), and the passages where Jesus calls for the last to be first (see Luke 13:23-30 and Luke 14:7-24).
 - d. In Luke, Jesus also focuses on forgiveness.
 - e. In Luke, Jesus is represented as a great prophet—like Elijah and Elisha.
6. Now having insights on literary, historical, and theological commitments, reread the text. Note what it may have meant to those reading it in its own time.
7. Finally, ask what the text may be saying to your contemporary community.